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ABSTRACT

Characteristics of University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee undergraduate students and their experiences were surveyed in 1980. The sample consisted of 1,270 white students and 182 minority students. Minority women tended to be parents and full-time students, while minority men tended to be working part-time students. High percentages of all race-gender subsamples expressed a need to form career plans, but the percentage was particularly high for minority women. Overall, the minority women were less satisfied with the university than were the other subsamples. Many underclass minority students stated that they intended to major in business, but upperclass students were more likely to major in education, social welfare, or a social science. For both minority and white students, the helpfulness of professors and advisors was significantly correlated with satisfaction with the university. For white students, satisfaction was a function of relationships with faculty; for minority students, the whole social climate was important. (Author/SW)

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Minority Students at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Who Are They and How Are They Doing?

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Abstract

Undergraduate students in a random sample of classes offered at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee were surveyed in class about their backgrounds and experiences. The sample consisted of 1270 white students and 182 minority students. With regard to noncollege roles, minority women tended to be parents, minority men tended to be working part-time students. High percentages expressed a need to form career plans in all race-gender subsamples, but the percentage was particularly high for minority women. Many underclass minority students stated that they intended to major in business, but upperclass students were more likely to major in education, social welfare, or a social science than underclass students. For both minority and white students, the helpfulness of professors and advisors was significantly correlated with satisfaction with the university. The correlations of university staff helpfulness with satisfaction with the university were higher for minority than for white students.

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Minority Students at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Who Are They and How Are They Doing?[1]

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In spring of 1980, a large survey was done in order to get a general assessment of the characteristics of UW-Milwaukee students and their experiences.

Sample

A random sample of UWM classes was chosen, with a slight over-sampling of Afro-American Studies and Department of Educational Opportunity classes in order to get more minority and disadvantaged students. The instructors were asked if a questionnaire could be distributed in their classes, and virtually all agreed.

The undergraduates in that survey included 1270 white students, 148 black students, 20 Native Americans, and 14 Hispanic students. Black, Native American, and Hispanic students were combined into a minority category. The data was analyzed for four subsamples: minority and white men and women. Foreign students were omitted.

Instrument

The questionnaire contained demographic questions and questions about student goals and aspirations, use of student services and

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[1]Presented at the meetings of the Wisconsin Educational Research Association, Madison, February 18, 1983.

satisfaction with them, participation in university social life, and overall satisfaction with UWM.

Student Roles

Minority college students have often been handicapped by the demands of non-college roles. They were more often employed than white students, or had heavy family responsibilities.

In order to assess the major role demands on students in the present study, full- vs. part-time student status[2] was examined in relation to hours worked per week and children. Hours worked was dichotomized into low employment (working less than 20 hours a week) vs. high employment (working 20 hours a week or more). (Astin (1975) found that working less than 20 hours a week had a positive effect on retention, but working more than 25 hours was detrimental.) The percentages of minority and white men and women in each category are shown in Table 1. Differences in percentages among the four subsamples were tested with a method suggested by Davis (1962).

Full-time students with no children and low levels of employment were able to devote most of their time to college. This category was the largest, for all four sex-race/ethnicity subsamples. Slightly over half of the minority men and white men

[2]Part-time students were probably underrepresented in the study, since they would be less likely to be in classes where the questionnaire was administered. This sample bias would affect all four subsamples equally.

Table 1. Student, Job, and Parent Roles of Minority and White Students

Roles	Minorities		Whites	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
Full-time students				
No children				
Low employment[a]	51%	37%	57%	59%
High employment[b]	12	13	27	22
Child(ren)				
Low employment	5	22	2	5
High employment	2	5	1	1
Subtotal	70%	77%	87%	87%
Part-time students				
No children				
Low employment	3	4	2	3
High employment	18	9	8	7
Child(ren)				
Low employment	0	3	0	2
High employment	8	6	2	1
Subtotal	29%	22%	12%	13%
Total	99%	99%	99%	100%
Base N	65	114	593	682

[a]Less than 20 hours/week. [b]20 hours/week or more.

and women fell into that category. Fewer of the minority women (37%) were in the predominantly college student role. (Minority women were significantly different from white men and women, (p less than .01).)

However, there were differences among the four subsamples in the second largest category. For minority women, the second largest (22%) was the student-parent category, that is, full-time students with one or more children working less than 20 hours a week. Significantly more minority women were in this category than were members of the other sex-ethnicity subsamples (p less than .01). The above results suggest that child-care facilities could be of help to minority women.

For minority men, second largest was the category of part-time students with no children but with heavy work loads (20 hours a week or more). Significantly more minority men were in that category than white men and women (p less than .01). The retention of minority men could probably be improved if they attended college full-time rather than part-time. Financial aid could probably be helpful for these students. (See Hall, 1984).

For the white men and women, the second largest category was full-time students with no children but with heavy work loads. About a fourth fell into that category, significantly more than the minority women (p less than .05).

All other categories were relatively small, less than 15% for all subsamples.

Percentages of students with high role demands were obtained by summing the percentages of full-time students with a high level of employment, at least one child, or both. This percentage was highest for minority women, 40%. For white men and women, it was about 30%. For minority men, it was 19%. (The differences between the minority women and the other subsamples were significant at the .05 level or better.) In other words, minority women did have higher role demands than white students, because of the high percentage with a child or children.

In summary, minority men and women tended to experience different role demands. Minority women had the heaviest role demand of the four sex-race/ethnicity subsamples. Fewer were in the predominantly student role (full-time students with no children and low levels of employment). More of them were full-time students with at least one child.

Among minority males, a relatively high percentage were part-time students with high levels of employment. Their role demands tended to be less than those of white students.

Student Goals and Their Achievement

In one section of the questionnaire, the students were given a list of 17 academic, career, social and personal goals.[3] For each goal, they were asked to indicate whether the goal was important to them, and whether they were achieving it, or had achieved it. Tables 2 and 3 show, for each goal, (1) the percentage who said that it was important and not being achieved, (2) the percentage who said it was important and achieved or being achieved, and (3) the total percentage who said it was important (the sum of (1) and (2)).

The students had very similar goals, regardless of race/ethnicity or sex. For all race-sex subsamples, the two goals described as important by the highest percentages of students were "To increase my knowledge and understanding in an academic field," and "To obtain a degree or certificate." For minority men and women and white males, the goal described as important by the third highest percentage was "To formulate long-term career plans." (For white women, "To develop my ability to be independent, self-reliant and adaptable" was third.)

Students in general felt that they were achieving the first two goals, the knowledge and degree goals. For minority and white males and white females, the highest percentages saying that the goal was important and being achieved were for those goals.

Areas of need exist where students indicated that a goal was important and not being achieved. For all four subsamples, the

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[3]These goals were adapted from those in the Student-Outcomes Information Services questionnaires developed by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, Boulder, Colorado.

Table 2. Percentages of Minority and White Men Indicating that Various Goals Were Important and Not Achieved, or Important and Being Achieved.

	Minorities			Whites		
	Important, not achieved	Important, achieved	Total important	Important, not achieved	Important, achieved	Total important
Academic goals						
Increase my knowledge in an academic field	23%	49%	73%	14%	69%	83%
Obtain a degree	26	42	68	21	56	77
Complete courses for transfer	20	7	28	9	9	18
Other academic goals	29	13	42	17	22	39
Career goals						
Discover career interests	19	30	49	22	37	60
Form long-term career plans	36	29	65	37	35	72
Prepare for new career	29	23	52	24	30	54
Improve skills for my job or career	20	29	49	22	47	70
Increase chances for raise or promotion	29	15	44	24	20	44
Social goals						
Become involved in student life, campus activities	15	9	23	14	9	24
Participate in cultural, social events	17	10	28	16	15	31
Meet people	19	32	51	20	39	59
Personal goals						
Increase my self-confidence	23	30	54	19	39	58
Improve my leadership skills	20	22	42	21	28	49
Improve my ability to get along with others	16	26	42	15	37	52
Enrich my life, become a more complete person	20	32	52	18	44	63
Become independent, self-reliant, adaptable	23	33	57	17	47	63

Table 3. Percentages of Minority and White Women Indicating that Various Goals Were Important and Not Achieved, or Important and Being Achieved.

	Minorities			Whites		
	Important, not achieved	Important, achieved	Total important	Important, not achieved	Important, achieved	Total important
Academic goals						
Increase my knowledge in an academic field	32%	41%	73%	10%	76%	86%
Obtain a degree	46	28	74	21	63	84
Complete courses for transfer	24	6	30	7	8	16
Other academic goals	41	13	55	18	30	47
Career goals						
Discover career interests	36	20	55	19	45	64
Form long-term career plans	52	15	67	31	42	73
Prepare for new career	37	15	52	19	37	57
Improve skills for my job or career	38	22	61	19	52	72
Increase chances for raise or promotion	37	8	45	26	14	41
Social goals						
Become involved in student life, campus activities	21	4	24	14	10	24
Participate in cultural, social events	29	13	41	19	16	35
Meet people	29	21	50	13	49	63
Personal goals						
Increase my self-confidence	24	28	52	16	52	68
Improve my leadership skills	33	19	52	24	32	56
Improve my ability to get along with others	22	22	45	11	45	56
Enrich my life, become a more complete person	31	25	56	16	55	71
Become independent, self-reliant, adaptable	26	31	57	17	58	75

highest percentages indicating that a goal was important but not being achieved were for the "Formulate career plans" goal.[4] For minority and white males, the second and third highest percentages of need were also career related. They were "To prepare for a new career" and "To increase my chances for a raise and/or promotion."

Alone of the four subsamples, minority women indicated needs in the area of obtaining a degree. Almost half said that goal was important but was not being achieved.

In summary, UWM is succeeding relatively well in its primary mission, to help students to increase their knowledge and earn degrees. However, there was a high level of need for help in career planning, among both minorities and whites and among men and women. The placement and Career Development Center offers some help in career planning, but its staff is limited and much of its efforts have been focused on helping graduating seniors to obtain jobs.

Men in particular indicated a need to have their course work relevant to careers, probably because of the tight job market. Obviously, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee cannot become simply a vocational training school. However, it could make courses career-relevant, without sacrificing educational values. For example, people

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[4]Higher percentages of underclassmen than upperclassmen indicated a need for career planning. But even for upperclassmen, the need for career planning was high relative to other needs.

working in a particular field, perhaps recent UWM graduates should give guest lectures about their jobs in courses related to their fields. Such lectures would make students more aware of career opportunities related to their majors, and of how the course work was useful in a particular career. In addition, students could be made more aware of the broader educational values of courses which are not career-relevant. This approach would appeal to students, as high percentages said that "Enrich my life, become a more complete person" was an important goal for them.

Majors

The responses to a question about the student's major or intended major were tabulated separately for underclassmen (freshmen and sophomores) vs. upperclassmen (juniors and seniors).

The data for men are shown in Table 4. For whites, there was little difference between the majors chosen by underclassmen and upperclassmen. In both groups, about a fifth chose business and about a fifth chose majors in science/engineering/math/computer science.

However, for minority men, there was a large difference in the choice of majors between underclassmen and upperclassmen. For underclassmen, business was by far the most popular choice, with about half the students. Among upperclassmen, less than 10% were majoring in business. Social services/social science was the most popular area, with a third of the students. The science/engineering/math/computer science fields were second, with a fourth. (These percentages are based on a relatively small number of students.)

The results for women are shown in Table 5. For white women, the health professions were the most popular field, and social services/social science, liberal arts, and business were next in popularity. There was little difference between underclasswomen and upperclassmen in the percentages in various majors.

However, for minority women, as for minority men, there were large differences. For underclasswomen, business was the most popular

Table 4

Majors of Minority and White Men, by Class

Majors	Minorities			Whites		
	Underclassmen	Upperclassmen	All Classes	Underclassmen	Upperclassmen	All Classes
Liberal arts	15%	4%	11%	17%	14%	16%
Education	3	9	5	2	4	3
Social Services, social science	5	35	16	14	14	14
Health professions	8	0	5	2	6	4
Business	51	9	36	23	24	23
Natural science, engineering, math, computer science	8	26	14	19	27	23
Other	0	0	0	11	5	8
No answer, undeclared	10	17	13	11	6	8
Total	100%	100%	100%	99%	100%	99%
Base N	39	23	62	247	304	551

Table 5

Majors of Minority and White Women, by Class

Major	Minorities			Whites		
	Underclass-men	Upperclass-men	All Classes	Underclass-men	Upperclass-men	All Classes
Liberal arts	12%	17%	14%	14%	17%	16%
Education	10	30	18	8	16	13
Social services, social science	20	30	24	16	17	16
Health Profes-sions	10	6	8	25	22	24
Business	30	2	18	13	13	13
Natural science, engineering, math, computer science	5	2	4	6	7	7
Other	2	0	1	1	1	1
No answer, unde-clared	13	13	13	16	7	11
Total	102%	100%	100%	99%	100%	101%
Base N	61	47	108	301	340	641

field, with almost a third. But among the upperclasswomen, virtually none were majoring in business. Thirty percent each were majoring in social services/social science and in education.

In summary, for white students, the most popular majors were fields with relatively good job opportunities (business and science/math for men and the health professions for women). There was little difference in majors, between the underclassmen and upperclassmen. However, for minority students, between underclassmen and upperclassmen, there was a drop in the percentage of students majoring in business, a field with relatively good job opportunities. There was an increase in the percentages in fields with poor job opportunities (social services/social science and, for females, education).

The low number of minority student upperclasspersons in business fields is unfortunate, given their interest in those areas, as shown by the high percentage of freshmen and sophomores who choose them as majors, and given the relatively good career opportunities in those areas. Some students may switch out of a business major because of its math requirements.

The present data have two limitations. First, they involve a relatively small number of students. Data on all minority students would given a complete picture. Such data is now being analyzed by Dr. Diane Pollard of the M/D Center. Secondly, the present data describe students at one point in time. A longitudinal study could be done to examine changes in major over time. Changes in the per-

centages of students majoring in different fields can occur for a number of reasons: students staying at UWM may change their majors, students in certain majors may be more likely to transfer into or out of UWM, and students in some majors may drop out of college entirely. The present data permit no way of testing which of these occur. An appropriate test to investigate the above possibilities would involve tracking the same students over a period of years.

Overall Satisfaction with UWM

Overall satisfaction with UWM was assessed with one general question, "Taking everything into account, how satisfied are you with your experiences at UWM so far."

The students answered this question on a five point scale ranging from "very satisfied" to "very dissatisfied." All four subsamples had means between 2, "satisfied," and 3, "neutral." For men, there was no difference between minority and white students in satisfaction with UWM. However, minority women were slightly but significantly less satisfied with UWM than white women.

Some significant correlates of overall satisfaction with UWM are shown in Table 6. Among minority men, older students and those with more children said that they were more satisfied with UWM. For both minority men and women, those who said that they were active in a political or social action organization were more satisfied with UWM. Such organizations included the Black Student Union and other minority organizations. In the literature on minority students in the predominantly white university, quite a bit has been written about social isolation. In our survey, a number of questions involved social participation in university life (socializing with other students, studying with other students, going to social and cultural events at UWM). None of those items were significantly correlated with satisfaction. In other words, not just social activity, but involvement with other minority students was important

for satisfaction with UWM. Such organizations probably lessened the sense of alienation that many minority students felt in a predominantly white university, and provided a sense of minority identity.

In one section of the questionnaire, the students were given a list of university staff members and services and asked to rate how frustrating or helpful they were, on a four-point scale. The correlations are shown in Table 6.

This table is different from the preceeding tables, as in this table no comparisons are being made between the different subsamples. Also, I do not have data on the level of helpfulness of the services. The correlations simply show whether the students' ratings of helpfulness were related to overall satisfaction with UWM. These correlations were, of course, based only on the students who had interacted with the different staff or services, and therefore the numbers vary widely. The n's are shown in parentheses. Only correlations of .25 or higher are shown in the table. Because of the high numbers of white students, all of the correlations involving them were significant at the .01 level.

For both minority and white students, the helpfulness of professors was significantly related to satisfaction witn UWM, particularly professors in the student's major. The helpfulness of staff and peer advisers was also important.

For white students, almost no other correlations were .25 or higher. But for minority students, a wide number of other people

Table 6

Correlations of Helpfulness of Interactions with Satisfaction with UWM
(Pearson r's, with n's in parentheses)

	Minorities		Whites[a]	
Helpfulness of:	Males	Females	Males	Females
Academic staff				
Prof. in major	.69*** (28)	.38** (49)	.31 (334)	.36 (446)
Prof. outside major	.28* (37)			.25 (388)
Teaching assistants		.28** (69)		
Staff advisors		.44*** (56)	.36 (269)	
Peer advisors		.32* (49)		.26 (272)
Academic services				
Admissions office	.27* (40)		.25 (371)	
Registration office	.33* (44)			
Secretaries		.48** (32)		
Nonacademic services				
Police/security	.51* (18)	.50** (22)		
Bookstore		.32** (83)		
Parking	.34* (38)	.32** (58)		
Cashier's office	.31* (43)	.27** (79)		
Placement and career development			.30 (104)	
Students				
Other students	.28* (41)	.36** (79)		
Student government		.42* (17)		

*p less than .05
**p less than .01
***p less than .001

[a]All correlations significant at the .01 level.

and services were important to satisfaction. Satisfaction with UWM was significantly correlated with the helpfulness of admissions, registration, secretaries, the police, parking, the cashier's office, and the bookstore. The helpfulness of student government and students in general was also related to overall satisfaction with UWM.

In other words, for white students, satisfaction with UWM was mainly related to the helpfulness of academic staff, that is, professors and advisors. But for minority students, the whole university climate was related to satisfaction. I can only speculate as to what is going on. It is possible that the dissatisfied students may have had trouble dealing with the bureaucratic nature of a large university, the various rules and regulations, and with knowing where to go for help with certain problems, and with getting help from the people they come in contact with. Such difficulties may have had a more negative impact on satisfaction for minority students than for white students.

Summary

To summarize the results: minority women had the most problems of the four race-sex subsamples. They had the heaviest role demands; a high percentage were parents, as well as full-time students. Almost half felt that they were not achieving an important goal, earning a degree. A high percentage were majoring in education, social welfare, or social science, fields with poor job opportunities. Half indicated a need for career planning. Overall, the minority women were less satisfied with UWM than the other subsamples.

Minority men were in a different situation. They were less involved in the university; more were part-time students with heavy work schedules. They indicated high career-related needs. Among the goals that were important but not achieved included the goal of forming a career plan, preparing for a new career, and increasing their chances for a raise or promotion. Many underclassmen intended to major in business, but few of the upperclassmen were doing so.

For both minority men and women, the helpfulness of a wide variety of university staff people (secretaries, staff in the admissions and registration office, cashiers, as well as advisors and professors) was related to overall satisfaction with UWM. For white men and women, the helpfulness of professors was related to satisfaction, but the helpfulness of other staff was only slightly related to satisfaction. In other words, for white students satis-

faction was a function of relationships with faculty; for minority students, the whole social climate was important.

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